

Adams Building
816 F Street, N.W.
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-214

HABS
DC
WASH
171-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. DC-214

ADAMS BUILDING

HABS
DC
WASH
171-

Location: 816 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: R. M. Sutton & F. L. Johnson

Present Occupant: George's Radio and Television Co., Inc.

Present Use: Retail store.

Brief Statement of Significance: A building illustrating the commercial development of F Street during the 1870's, of interesting architectural character.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: On April 1, 1878 Thomas W. Johnson and Robert M. Sutton leased to J. Bradley Adams [889-30 rec. May 22, 1878] new lot #15 of sq. 406, part of original lot #9 (begin at NW corner of lot #9, thence east 34'8", south 100', west 34'8", & north 100'). Ten year lease--\$900 per year rent. Conditions: Adams is expected to purchase property 6 months before end of lease, at market value, to be determined by arbitrators. Adams will erect a "neat and substantial building" soon after the execution and delivery of the lease.

An agreement with George Wasserman made on June 19, 1947 by Flora D. Sutton, et al., descended heirs of Robert M. Sutton [8827-500 rec. Sept. 13, 1948] gave a 25 year lease noting that Wasserman might connect the building to property owned at 812 F Street, adjoining.

2. Date of erection: 1878.

B. Sources of information:

Primary and unpublished sources: District of Columbia records.

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: A commercial building of the post Civil-War period whose second story fenestration offers an interesting example of development toward larger glass areas.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior fabric is in good condition and is original. Much of interior is new.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 34'8" X 70'; two bays wide; two stories and base; rectangular in shape.
2. Foundations: Not visible.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The first story front of this building has been modernized with large metal framed glass and a large neon sign which extends across the front of the building and onto the front of the adjacent building to the east. The wall is made of brick, yellow in color and laid in running bond.
4. Structural systems, framing: Wood posts with wood moulded trim.
5. Chimneys: Near the front of the building, just right of the center is a brick chimney.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doors are modern. The entrance is wide (approx. 6') and made of glass with metal framing. The entrance has double doors which open into the building and are approx. 7' tall.
 - b. Windows: The entire first floor front of the building is glass. The second story has three vertical double-hung windows (1/1), rectangular in shape, in each bay. Over each window is a brick hood moulding. These hood mouldings are joined together, and form a pointed arch at the top with brick headers about 1 1/2" outlining this form. The hood moulding is segmented in shape just above the window, with the space between the window and the hood moulding

HABS
DC
WASH
171 -

ornamented with moulded designs probably made of cast iron. The window, which is trimmed in wood moulding, is flanked about 1/5 of its height on either side by the hood moulding. About one quarter of the way down the window is a brick belt which continues across the face of the building and appears between each window in the bays.

There are two skylights with a light gable-like metal frame on the second floor. The lights in them are glazed and painted black. A third skylight rests over the stairway to the second floor. This skylight is in the roof which forms about a 30° slope angle. The glass is reinforced with mesh wire and is translucent. The skylight itself is trimmed in wood moulding and painted. These skylights are evidently original.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat with a very small slope running north to south.
- b. Cornice: At each end of the wall of the building are decorative vertical corbel blocks, which are rectangular in shape. In the center of this block is an embellished panel with moulded trim. Above these blocks is a wood motif which is moulded round and which slants into the corbel block. Below the corbel block is a larger supporting rounded bracket decorated with a band of horizontal reeding down its center. Below that is a vertical ribbon, tapered and circular in shape at its end with a dome-like projection in its center and a flower-like design projection up from it. The vertical ribbons lie on a flat brick surface which projects from the wall and which terminates a course of zig-zag brickwork. Above this brickwork is a plain string course above which lies a wider band, plain with moulded trim.

Just above this band is a course of similar but smaller, rounded brackets which support a simple cornice. This cornice projects boldly from the surface of the wall and has a long horizontal moulded panel. On this panel are the imprints of two words, "Adams Building," which probably once stood out in relief and which were centered horizontally across the front. At the top of the cornice is a bold strip of moulding. In the center of the cornice is a raised panel, around which the cornice moulding is carried up its sides and along its gable.

In its center is a moulded panel with imprints of the number, "187," with the last digit of this number being either an "8" or a "6".

HABS
DC
WASH
171-

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: In plan, this building appears to have been remodeled, causing great changes to its interior. The entire first floor is completely open. There is a central stairway leading to the basement and a stairway off the west wall leading to the second floor. An opening has been cut into the east party wall which leads into the adjacent building which has been combined with this building to house a single business.
2. Stairways: The first floor stairway which leads to the basement is completely remodeled with the treads carpeted. The rise is 7" and the tread is 11" with 1" nosing.

The stairway leading to the second floor has a landing approx. 5' from the floor with the tread covered with linoleum. The soffit of the stairway is covered with sheet metal. The hand railing is moulded iron.
3. Flooring: Floor is covered with composition tile and carpet. This is evidently not original state of floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are plaster with 7" wood moulded baseboard, painted green which is apparently new. The ceiling is partially of plaster painted white (redecorated), and of sheet metal which is probably original. The first floor ceiling height is approx. 8' while on the second floor, the ceiling height is approx. 12'. Portions of the first floor ceiling are also covered with cork tile and dropped approximately 12".
5. Doorways and doors: On the second floor is an archway approximately 8' tall and 4'6" wide, trimmed in wood moulding, painted green. The doors are probably original, standing 7' with two vertical moulded panels. Thresholds are of moulded wood.
6. Mechanical equipment: The building is equipped with modern lighting and fixtures with heating and cooling ducts visible. Also, there is addition of modern plumbing and toilet fixtures.

HABS
DC
WASH
171-

D. Site and Surroundings:

General setting: Building faces north and buildings
adjacent on east and west.

Prepared by: Thomas L. Fauntleroy
Student Architect
National Park Service
June 1969

Addendum to:
Adams Building
816 F Street, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

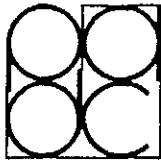
HABS No. DC-214

HABS
DC,
WASH,
171-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127



PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION
425 13TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

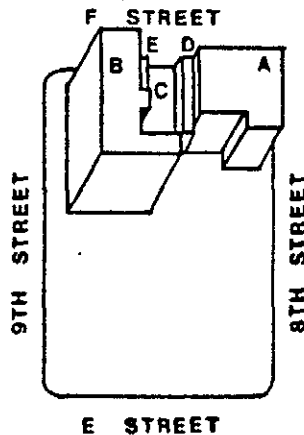
GENERAL CONSULTANTS

ANDERSON, NOTTER / MARIANI
GENERAL PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
DEVROUX & PURNELL
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
DAVID MCLAREN, HART & ASSOCIATES
PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK, DUNSTONE, ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BUILDING DOCUMENTATION

Adams Building
816 F Street, NW
Lot 15



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 406, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 406, see HABS No. DC-572.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The site is located approximately fifty feet from Ninth Street and is rectangular in shape. The building is entered from F Street, which has been recently converted into a pedestrian mall. The lot is approximately thirty-five feet wide by one hundred feet deep. The building's first floor is rectangular and covers the entire site; however, the second story extends back only thirty-six feet, forming an approximate square plan. The building shares masonry party walls with buildings to the east and west. The front facade is approximately as high as it is wide. The two-story pressed red brick facade is painted yellow. The first floor has a modern storefront and sign that extends across its entire facade and that of the adjacent commercial building at 814 F Street. This addition obscures the original building up to the sill line of the second story windows. Two groups of three segmental arched windows each, symmetrically placed, dominate the second story facade. The elevation is completed with a heavy wood cornice, which once contained the name Adams Building and the construction date of 1878. No building permit is available. The Adams Building and 814 F Street are now occupied by George's Radio and Television Company, Inc.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As an isolated entity, the Adams Building constitutes a pleasant example of the High Victorian Italianate style and contributes to the Landmark II Status of the 800 block of F Street. The facade presents an overall square proportion which could have proven very disruptive in a traditional environment where verticality tends to be dominant. Nevertheless, it has been cleverly treated so that it blends with the surrounding facades. The rise of the elevation is articulated into two stories and a shallow attic above the roof cornice. The resulting strong horizontality of the second story is altered by establishing an implied two bay division, each with an arcade of three segmental arched windows. To emphasize the expanse of the facade, however, the roof cornice and attic run the full width of the building without responding to the two bays below.

Bold, yet simple details enrich the facade in selected areas: around the second floor window, and at the roof parapet and cornice.

While the Adams is shorter than other buildings on the block, it retains the urban scale that characterizes this portion of F Street. Its cohesiveness with the environment is further established by the trios of second floor windows, a feature that occurs also on the LeDroit Building and on the F Street facade of the Atlas-Warder to

the west. The height discrepancy of the Adams is mitigated by its adjacency to three-story buildings, which creates an acceptable transition between it and the taller buildings at each end of the block.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Facade: The lower story of the F Street facade is entirely covered by the modern addition of a storefront and signs that rise to the sill line of the second floor windows. The upper floor consists of a pressed brick wall, painted ochre, embellished by two arcades of three windows each and an elaborate, non-academic roof cornice.

Bay divisions are implied by groupings of windows on each side of the facade. These consist of three segmental-arched openings separated by narrow brick piers. The arcades are unified internally as well as with each other by a stone impost course that runs the width of the facade at about one fifth the distance from the top of the window openings. Resting on two corbeled courses above the impost course is a slightly projecting triple window hood that ties together each arcade and has the stilted-arch form characteristic of the High Victorian Italianate style. The hoods feature a peculiar difference between the intrados and the extrados, with the latter adopting a pointed arch form while the former follows the segmental arch of the window opening.

The facade is topped by a modified wood cornice set above a course of corbeled brick set in a zig-zag fashion. The lower portion of the cornice is a plain wood architrave set off by moldings. Above this, a plain frieze carries brackets with a reeded quarter-round profile. These brackets support a wide projecting wood panel topped by a crown molding. This panel bears the ghost of an inscription, "Adams Building". At the center of the cornice is a raised panel with a gable top that bears the imprint of "1878". The cornice is contained at each end by a large bracket with Eastlake inspired ornament.

September 1979



F STREET (NORTH) FACADE



NORTH FACADE: DETAIL OF WINDOW GROUP OF SECOND FLOOR



NORTH FACADE: DETAIL OF
CORNICE AT CENTER



NORTH FACADE: DETAIL OF
CORNICE AT EAST END

Lot 9 West (Sublot 15)
814-816 F Street

Lot 9 originally measured approximately 50' x 100'. Sublot 15, the western part of the original lot, is also rectangular in shape, extending 34'-8" across F Street.

1819.....Lot 15 was assessed to Moses Young.

1824.....No Lot 15 is listed. Lot 15 was originally part of Lot 9, which was assessed here for \$447.00 in the name of Timothy King. \$450.00 in improvements were assessed.

1826.....Abigail King inherited Lot 9.

1829.....The tax assessment records show Lot 9 divided in two. The larger portion ("3/4 9") belonged to Abigail King.

1844.....\$1,117.00 was the value given the larger portion of Lot 9. It was owned by Abigail King's heirs and William Wilson.

1859.....Lot 9 was listed in total as being owned by Abigail King and William Wilson. It was worth \$3,750.00.

1864.....Lot 9 increased in value to \$8,691.00.

1870.....The western part of Lot 9 was worth \$1,800.00. No owner is given.

D. C. Colby, a patent agent, was a tenant at 816 F Street, according to the directories. E. B. Elicott Parham also sold sewing machines at that address.

1878/79..Building Permit #414, dated March 28, 1878, authorized the construction of a two-story brick building with a flat roof and projecting show windows. It was to be an office and a store. James H. McGill was the architect and William B. Downnie & Brothers were the builders. Bradley Adams owned the lot. The cost of construction was estimated at \$5,000.00. The building became known as the "Adams Building".

Tax assessment records indicate that the western sector of Lot 9 measured 34'-8" in street frontage. This is the present width of Lot 15. It was valued at \$9,538.00. The lot was owned by Thomas W. Johnson and Robert M. Sutton.

The 1870s Directories showed a high turnover of tenants and a wide variety of professions in the building. In 1878 Antonio Ratto was a confectioner at 814 F Street in 1879. Lot owner J. Bradley Adams, a stationer, moved in at that address. He continued to be listed periodically until 1889. Tenants at 816 F Street were: Clum & Dingman, claim agents (until 1889); Percy G. Smith, general agent; C. C. Royce, lawyer (until 1881); James Thompson, shirtmaker (until 1884).

1882.....A permit was issued to alter the building by adding an accessory back brick building. Bradley Adams was still the owner (Building Permit #762, 12/28/1882, cost: \$113.00). New tenants this year included the patent attorneys Philip T. Dodge (until 1886) and Myers & Company (until 1892). Although members of the legal profession became prevalent in the building, other professions continued to inhabit the structure. A shirtmaker named James Thompson also occupied 816 F Street at this time.

1883/84..Now listed as Sublot 15 in the tax assessment books, the lot was worth \$9,565.00. Thomas W. Johnson and Robert M. Sutton owned the lot.

Fenner B. Taylor, a draftsman and mining engineer, moved into the building in 1884. He remained for ten years. He was accompanied by Joseph E. Holmes until 1886.

1888.....A permit taken out by F. Miller authorized construction of a one-story brick addition to the building. It was 10' x 16' with a tin roof. E. C. Ellmore was the builder (Building Permit #430, 9/1/1888, cost: \$100.00).

1893/94..The assessment value rose to \$15,651.00. \$4,000.00 in improvements were assessed. Robert M. Sutton and Fannie S. Johnson, executor and trustee, were the owners.

The Hartsock Brothers operated an eating house at 814-816 F Street. In 1894 Henry J. Hayden & Company, claim agents, began a five-year

tenancy at 816 F Street.

1896

to

1905.....Julius Selinger sold watches and jewelry in the building, according to the directories.

1897

to

1901.....Charles S. Campbell ran an eating house at 814 F Street. He also reappeared in the directory in 1904.

1899/

1900.....The owners and assessment values were unchanged, but a \$3,500.00 improvement was recorded.

Residents in 1900 not previously mentioned were: J. W. Jones' employment office, the Malay Remedy Company, and Bertrand L. Hays, printer.

1901

to

1905.....Harry A. Park, printer, was a tenant, according to City Directory information. In 1905 H. C. Parks (sic) obtained a permit to install a one horsepower electric motor to run a printing press (Building permit #1606, 2/18/1905). Later in the year, a permit was granted to Robert M. Sutton for the reconstruction of doors, show windows and the floor in the lunch room (Building Permit #567½, 8/26/1905, cost: \$100.00).

1907

to

1921.....William J Bacon, an engraver, appeared periodically in the directory listings for 814 F Street.

1908.....Swartzell, Rheem, Hensy Company took out a permit for reconstructive work including the replacement of wooden girders with steel I-beams. New show windows were also installed and the sidewalk access to the cellar was closed (Building Permit #2313, 2/5/1908, cost: \$500.00).

Swayze, Bailey & Company moved in at B14 F Street, remaining through 1913. They were listed alternately in the directories under stationers, government supplies and duplicating machines.

1911

to

1925.....Several new long term tenants appeared in the records. Morris L. Schnider was a jeweler and watchmaker during the entire period. S. Silberg & Brothers, tailors, appeared from 1912 to 1921. In 1915 J. Bernstein obtained a permit to build a new facade (Building Permit #3444, 3/24/1915. The following year John (Jack) Bernstein opened his tailor shop. He remained until 1929.

Other tenants at 814 and B16 F Street in the early 1920s were: the Academy Window Cleaning Company, the Gold Bond Exchange, Arthur J. Dettmers, engraver, the United Woolen Mills, Louis E. Reed, tailor, and Clarence H. Kirstein, shoe salesman.

1923.....Sutton & Johnson were granted a permit to enlarge the door and show windows (Building Permit #2050, 9/6/1923, cost: \$200.00).

1925.....Jack Bernstein obtained another permit giving him permission to install two show windows. Rodney Cladney was listed as the builder (Building Permit #5477, 12/21/1925, cost: \$900.00). The Post Radio Show took up residence at B16 F Street and remained until 1933.

1930

to

1933.....Julius Wineberg took over Bernstein's tailor shop.

1934.....Jimmie's Shoe Repair Shop moved into B14 F Street. George's Radio Company opened next door at 816 F Street.

1936.....Vincenzo Dellamonica took over the shoe repair shop.

1948.....George's Radio Company became George's Radio & Television Company. It now occupied the entire Adams Building.

1956.....The name "Boyd's Television & Appliance Company, Inc." appeared in the Directories for this year only.

1979.....George's Radio & Television Company, Inc., still occupied the Adams Building at 816 F Street.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

1792	(October 5) Washington first platted
1813	First TAX ASSESSMENT record
1819	Tax Assessment
1822	First CITY DIRECTORY
1824	Tax Assessment
1829	Tax Assessment
1834	City Directory
1839	Tax Assessment
1840	Tax Assessment
1843	City Directory
1844	Tax Assessment
1846	City Directory
1850	City Directory
1853	City Directory
1855	City Directory - first time house numbers were used as part of addresses
1858	First MAP of DC - Baschke
1858	City Directory
1859	Tax Assessment
1862	City Directory - Directories published annually hereafter
1864	Tax Assessment
1869-1871	Tax Assessment
1870	New street numbering system instituted; many early addresses in PADC site changed
1872	Plat Map (Bastert)
1878	First recorded building permit
1878-1879	Tax Assessment
1883-1884	Tax Assessment
1887	Plat Map (Hopkins)
1892	Plat Map (Hopkins)
1893-1894	Tax Assessment
1899-1900	Tax Assessment
1903	Plat Map (Baist)
1919	Plat Map (Baist)
1920	Plat Map (Baist)
1923	Plat Map (Baist)
1924	Plat Map (Baist)
1939	Plat Map (Baist)
1948	Plat Map (Baist)
1957	Plat Map (Baist)

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas
Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps
Boyd's City Directories
District of Columbia Building Permits
District of Columbia General Assessment Records
District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds
District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records
District of Columbia Tax Records
Hopkins Real Estate Atlas
Polk's City Directories
Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency
Sanborn Insurance Map